

Department of Rehabilitation Services**Testimony before the Human Services Committee**

February 18, 2016

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Markley, Representative Wood and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Amy Porter, Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitation Services and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 17, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Human Services. In particular, I am here to talk about Section 18 which contains a new proposal to find savings in the area of health insurance for former workers at the BESB Industries sheltered workshop which was closed in 2003.

When the workshop was closed, the Employment Opportunities program was created to provide employment services and health insurance for the individuals who had been employed there. At that time, there were few options for health insurance. However, with the passage of the Affordable Care Act, the options have expanded considerably.

The change in legislation would constitute a "qualifying event" for Access Health CT, and would allow the affected individuals to apply for coverage outside of the Open Enrollment period. Our Department will offer to work with each of the 19 individuals whose health insurance coverage is paid for through our agency. Staff from Access Health CT are accustomed to taking a multi-modal approach with applicants for Affordable Care Act coverage in Connecticut. We have already reached out to Access Health CT, and look forward to working with them during this transition. We will also work with staff from the Department of Social Services to explore options for these individuals.

The savings to the state budget is estimated at \$183,000 for FY2017 and we intend, within available appropriations, to continue the employment supports to those individuals currently being served.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Human Services. I would be happy to answer any questions.